

# Lies Of Our Times

January 1990

Premier Issue

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Quayle Stressing Human Rights (see back cover).

Credit: Wide World Photos

**Chomsky and Cockburn Take On A.M. Rosenthal**  
**Herman and Andersen on El Salvador and Lindsey Gruson**  
**The Real War in Colombia Isn't About Drugs**  
**Hans Koning Follows Bush in Europe**  
**AIDS, Pro-Choice, Chile, Secret Report on PanAm Flight 103**



## Lies Of Our Times

A Journal to Correct the Record

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## TO OUR READERS

Welcome to *Lies Of Our Times*, a monthly magazine of media criticism. "Our Times" are the times we live in; but they are also the words of the *New York Times*, the most cited news medium in the United States, our paper of record. Our "Lies" are more than literal falsehoods; they encompass subjects that have been ignored, hypocrisies, misleading emphases, and hidden premises—the biases which systematically shape reporting.

Our coverage is based on the research of more than one hundred correspondents—not only media critics, but also academics, journalists, literary figures, and activists. We

have also solicited the help of a variety of public interest and human rights groups, to advise us of their dealings with the media. We will pay close attention to press releases, stories, proposed columns, and letters that fail to make it into the mass media. We urge you, our readers, to share your media experiences with us. And of course, do not limit yourselves to the *New York Times*.

We can, to be sure, only address a sampling of the universe of media lies and distortions. But, over time, we hope that *Lies Of Our Times* will go a long way toward correcting the record. ●

# PRIDE OF AUTHORSHIP, "GRINGO INTERFERENCE," AND THE PANAMA CANAL

By William H. Schaap

Style books have their place; readers may be jarred by inconsistencies throughout a publication. But they can be fraught with political implications; substance can easily be disguised as style. Until about a year ago, the *Times* did not allow *Ms.* to be used. It would, in its wisdom, refer to "Miss Gloria Steinem, the publisher of *Ms. Magazine*." Until recently, the *Times* did not allow the word "gay" to be used at all. It now allows it as an adjective, but not as a noun.

Several years ago, the *Times* decided to refer to the Non-Aligned Movement as "the group of countries which refer to themselves as the non-aligned movement," a decision for which William Borders, then the editor of *The News of the Week in Review*, publicly claimed credit. (He did not, of course, suggest usage of "the group of countries which refer to themselves as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.") Recently, to its credit, the *Times* has begun to refer to "the countries which make up the non-aligned movement." And, to give just one more example, for many years the *Times* has referred to "the Allende regime" in Chile, while at the same time referring to "the Pinochet government." An interesting distinction, considering that Allende came to power through an election, and Pinochet through a coup.

But stylistic fiat aside, there is a certain cachet about being *Times* front-page by-line reporters, and their reputation as wordsmiths is high. Thus the May 10, 1989, issue of the newspaper of record is of some interest.

On page one there was a major piece by Bernard Weinraub entitled, "Bush Urges Effort to Press Noriega to Quit as Leader." Near the bottom of the column, the last paragraph on the page begins:

The Panama Canal treaties, which provide for Panama to take over canal operations in the year 2000, help explain why the United States has an exceptionally deep interest in the stability and internal affairs of Panama.

The article concluded on page ten. Opposite, on page 11, there was a related piece by Robert Pear entitled, "Canal Pacts: U.S. Looking at Dire Straits." This is the opening paragraph:

The Panama Canal treaties, once again the subject of debate here [Washington], help explain why the United States has an exceptionally deep interest in the stability and internal affairs of Panama.

One would think that this is carrying the style-book concept a bit too far. On the other hand, since the evidence suggests that the *Times* would not look askance at the overthrow of the government of Panama, perhaps the need to stress an "exceptionally deep" national interest outweighs the pride of authorship of its crackerjack correspondents.

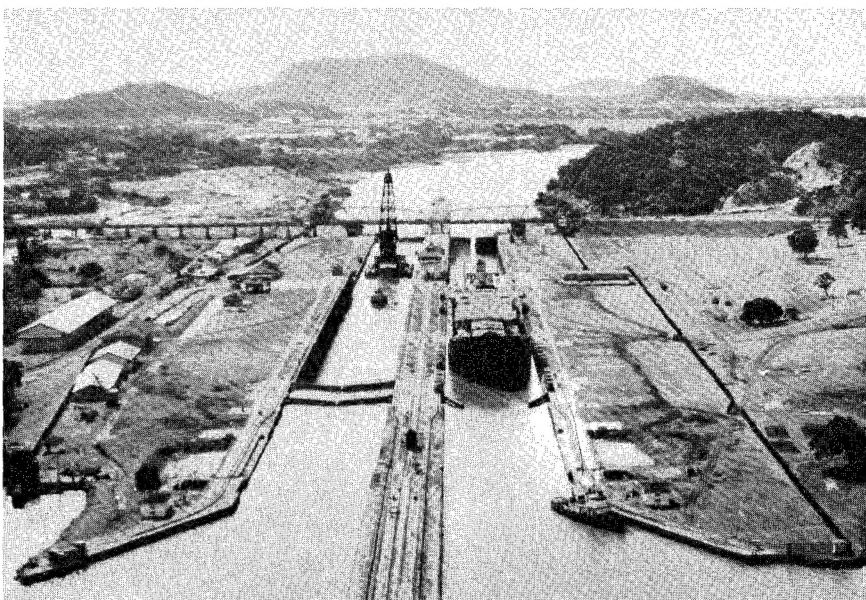
For evidence of this proposition, we have only to look at the next day's paper. On the front page of the May 11 *New*

*York Times* there was an article by R.W. Apple, Jr. entitled, "Bush's Trap On Panama: Can He Avoid Label of a Gringo Meddler?" The second paragraph reads as follows:

Because of the long-festering resentment over past instances of United States imperialism in Latin America, many of the things that Mr. Bush might do to weaken the Panamanian leader, like sending more troops to Panama

or even invading, are nearly impossible. However benign in intent, they would look to most Latin American capitals like gringo interference.

In these two astonishing sentences, the reporter characterizes the intention to invade another country as "benign," and echoes the administration's complaint that such an invasion might "look like" — not "constitute," but "look like" — interference. The nerve of those foreigners! ●



Credit: Wide World Photos

The Panama Canal, love it or leave it.

# THE PRESS AND EL SALVADOR

By Robin Andersen

By its audacity, the recent rebel offensive in El Salvador has surprised and confounded the rightwing government. Judging from our newspapers, it has also bewildered the U.S. press with a local reality to which conventional, official wisdom cannot be applied. As the U.S.-backed Cristiani government was supposed to have "captured the momentum," and all but defeated the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN), how was the *New York Times* to explain the sudden reversal of military fortunes other than by a retreat to a second line of protective formulas: failed bid for power, loss of touch with the masses, trying to provoke the military to excesses, upsetting the peace process, etc.?

## The Unaccountable Offensive

In November, the FMLN carried out its own Tet offensive, taking control of significant sections of San Salvador while contesting the government for control of provincial capitals and army posts across the country. The offensive came after a spate of stories suggesting that the FMLN was on the verge of defeat, all but finished by the skilled application of a U.S. strategy of low-intensity conflict. As recently as July 30, 1989, a *Times* front-page story heralded, "With Training and New Tactics, Salvador's Army Gains on Rebels," and said the FMLN was "faltering." Less than a month before the FMLN's offensive, Lindsey Gruson noted (October 20, 1989, p. A3), "the armed forces appear to have captured the momentum."

During the first five days of the offensive, the *Times* reported that the government was ready to drive the rebels from the capital, culminating with a front-page headline on November 16 which proclaimed, "Salvador Army Is Said to Seize Rebel Positions; Guerrillas Are Reported on Brink of Defeat" (p. A1). But the very next day, reality forced a retraction of sorts when the FMLN remained entrenched in most of San Salvador's working-class neighborhoods, despite a government counterattack which left thousands of civilians dead and wounded. On November 17, Gruson performed a flip-flop, acknowledging that "the military was having more trouble than it had admitted in dislodging the guerrillas..." and that the FMLN was on the "verge of turning the cities into a permanent front." ("Stepped-Up Fighting Engulfs Salvador," p. A13.) In the course of 24 hours the FMLN had performed a military miracle, going from the brink of defeat to the creation of a permanent front in the capital.

The *Times* continued to characterize the FMLN assault as a failed bid for power on November 18, 19, and 20. It did not even report on the offensive outside San Salvador in which insurgents hit military targets and other major urban centers.

## The Hostage Crisis That Wasn't

On November 21, less than 24 hours after most media reported the guerrillas' total eradication from San Salvador, hundreds of rebel troops stormed several of the capital's

wealthiest neighborhoods. In the course of heavy street fighting, an FMLN unit entered the San Salvador Hotel, formerly the Sheraton, seeking a defensible position to stave off government counterattacks. Unbeknownst to the rebels, the hotel served as a command post for a contingent of U.S. Green Berets actively aiding the Salvadoran armed forces.

The ensuing standoff was rapidly billed a "hostage taking" by the press, despite the total lack of evidence to support this interpretation. At no time did the FMLN make any demands in exchange for the release of any hostages; instead the rebels allowed the hotel's many guests to leave while they negotiated for their own safe passage out of a situation which was decidedly not a military operation. The facts did not prevent the *Washington Post*, in its November 22 lead story, from beginning its account with "Leftist rebels launched a predawn raid on a luxury hotel in the capital...."

## Civilians "Caught in the Middle" — Rebels "Out of Touch"

The media interpretation of civilian attitudes has constantly described the populace as "caught in the middle," not supporting either side in the war, and refusing to participate in a large-scale popular uprising. The *New York Times Week in Review* for November 26, 1989, contains a particularly confused article by Lindsey Gruson which portrays the rebels as

## "I'M OKAY, YOU'RE OKAY"

By William Preston, Jr.

Cognitive dissonance in reporting from El Salvador reached a new high in a recent *New York Times* dispatch (November 23, p. A1). While President Cristiani of El Salvador claimed his forces had dealt the opposition a "decisive" and "total" defeat, his air force was bombing the neighborhood surrounding the press conference and "drowning out" his statements of victory as a rebel patrol was moving through the area and other attacks were apparently being prepared.

The dispatch claimed Cristiani "appeared relaxed and confident," yet it described his eyes as "rimmed by red and deeply sunken in his face." When asked a question, the president "stood up, knocking over his chair" and "borrowed a cigarette" in spite of having quit the habit a month earlier.

It was not clear whether Lindsey Gruson's straight-faced reporting was really tongue-in-cheek, but one can imagine how he would have covered a similar conference in Adolf Hitler's bunker in the last days of the Third Reich. ●



being “out of touch” and therefore unable to “ignite a spark” in the capital. Entitled “Salvador Rebels Lose Touch, But Still Show Their Strength,” Gruson’s article attempts to reconcile the force of the FMLN offensive with the establishment claim that there is little indigenous support for the rebels by asserting that they may indeed be strong, but are desperately out of touch with the rest of the country. This is illustrated in the first paragraph by the depiction of an FMLN rebel who stands in awe at the sight of a fancy hotel room with a tiled shower. He says, “I’ve never been in San Salvador before. I’ve never seen wealth like this.” Gruson does not give an estimate of the proportion of people in El Salvador who have seen that wealth or who have tiled showers, but he uses this to construct a portrait of the guerrillas as an “isolated sect” living in the mountains, who “have lost touch with the average [*sic*] city dweller,” and whose “narrow view of the world seems to have tricked them into believing that they could set off an insurrection with their latest offensive,” but “the civilians did not rise.”

It has been a longstanding theme of the *Times* that the failure of the populace to rise up and fight demonstrates their lack of support for the FMLN. The *Times* has never applied this idea to Czechoslovakia or Poland, however, by suggesting that the failure of the people there to rise up and throw off their oppressors proves support for the regimes in power. It is assumed that Eastern Europeans did not rise up for fear of retribution from superior force. Gruson and the *Times* never suggest that similar fears might explain the absence of an uprising in El Salvador, although the *Times* does acknowledge that the war has “claimed 70,000 lives, many of them civilians killed by death squads linked to the Government and the armed forces.” (“Salvador Peace Talks End Without an Accord,” October 19, 1989, p. A11.)

In the November 26 article, Gruson goes on to say that there were “an estimated 10,000 people” killed in the uprising of 1932, so that the Salvadoran people “have learned one thing...to remain neutral.” Most authorities estimate that 30,000 people were massacred by the government in 1932. And “neutrality” is surely deceptive under a regime of terror.

Gruson’s most revealing passage is as follows:

Still, the rebels did show they hold a key to the success of President Alfredo Cristiani’s ambitious plan to rebuild the economy and improve Salvadorans’ lives. It is now clear that his ability to do that depends on the rebels’ willingness to make peace.

We may note the apology in describing Cristiani’s economic policy as “ambitious...rebuilding,” making him into a redistributionist and advocate of the welfare state, which is close to ARENA’s public relations claims but has nothing to do with this oligarch’s regressive economic policies. Gruson also leaves peacemaking entirely up to the rebels. In the real world, the rebels offered a serious plan in January, which was turned down peremptorily by ARENA. Cristiani and ARENA have not offered one of their own, which means that they are fighting to win and expect the rebels to surrender or be annihilated. Gruson and the *Times*, interpreting all this as “peace” being

in the hands of the rebels, therefore speak entirely on the premises of ARENA.

### ARENA and the Peace Process

That the November 26 article is the product of spin control is more evident when the “peace focus” is compared to earlier reports, by Gruson himself, of peace talks that did take place from October 16 through 18 in Costa Rica.

Gruson’s first article covering the talks (October 17, 1989, p. A6) states that the FMLN presented a proposal “to lay down their arms and join the political process in exchange for sweeping political changes and deep cuts in the armed forces....” On the other hand, the Cristiani government had no proposal, but “promised to respond at the meeting here with its own offer.” However, by the last day of talks, Gruson admits that the Government offered a solution that was no proposal at all. The government “proposed that all fighting stop today and the guerrilla army be demobilized by January. But it offered almost no concessions to the rebels and did not address the social and economic issues that led the guerrillas to take up arms.” (Note that there seems to be another point of view concerning the economy, which Gruson totally ignored in his November 26 piece.) Gruson also reports that members of the rebel delegation were disappointed that no “agreement to prevent human rights abuses and lessen the war’s effect on civilians” had been made. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion, from the *Times*’s own reporting, that Cristiani and ARENA were not seriously negotiating. It is also made clear that the rebels were concerned with civilian lives. All this would be forgotten by the November 26 report.

Gruson’s October 17 report of the talks in Costa Rica also stresses that the rebels’ apparent military weakness gives them little bargaining leverage. However, with the FMLN offensive, the Gruson-*Times* view is not that the FMLN has now enhanced its bargaining power, it is that hope fades for negotiations (“With Salvador Flare-Up, Hope Fades,” December 1,



Credit: Wide World Photos

Roberto D'Aubuisson, left, and Alfredo Cristiani campaigning at an ARENA Rally, March 1988.

1989, p. A3). The Reagan-Bush philosophy for Nicaragua, never contested by the *Times*, was that *contra* military pressure was necessary to extract democratic concessions. With the FMLN, they are either too weak to bargain or too aggressive to do business with.

On November 16 six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter were slain by men in uniform. On November 28, in an article entitled "Witness Links the Killers of 6 Priests to El Salvador's Armed Forces" (p. A8), Gruson quotes a Salvadoran judge who states, "It probably was members of the military...." Gruson adds that the six priests "were among the most eloquent supporters of a negotiated settlement to the decade-old civil war...." The thoughtful reader might wonder why the right wing and/or army, which according to Gruson is waiting for the rebels to make peace, would kill the very individuals who were working for that goal. Gruson apparently does not see the contradiction, as it is not addressed in any of his copy.

In the article "With Salvador Flare-Up, Hope Fades," the reporting is more rhetorical and mystified, and more forceful-

ly repeats the themes from the November 26 report. Rebels are no longer simply out of touch, but are now actually blamed for rightwing repression: The "offensive has been intended to provoke large-scale retaliation by right-wing extremists." This statement is not supported by any evidence, and therefore violates basic media rules of objectivity. When Gruson then says, "The rebels say the retaliation will prove that the rightist Government of President Alfredo Cristiani is fascist and will drive the middle class into the leftists' arms," he presents this as a rebel position, rather than a comment on the existing situation. Gruson asserts that the rebel offensive "all but closed the nascent political opening provided to leftist opposition leaders." Any fair-minded observer might have concluded that the political space had closed on October 31, almost two weeks before the rebel offensive, when the government bombed the FENASTRAS union headquarters. This point was made in the first AP report of the fighting on November 11 published in the *Times* — before the discourse boundaries were redefined. Even though the language discredits the rebels, information is included which all but disappears in later reports as:

Rebel leaders claim that President Cristiani is not interested in negotiating a solution to the conflict. They also blame his government for the Oct. 31 bombing of a union headquarters in San Salvador that killed 10 people and injured more than 30.

#### Killing the Poor

On November 30, 1989, a *Christian Science Monitor* radio report on Fordham University's noncommercial station, WFUV, aired portions of an interview done with father Ignacio Martín-Baro before his death. The Jesuit priest made a sophisticated analysis of the similarities between the actions and ideology of the Salvadoran right and fascism. He had also talked to many of the children of the right wing, asking what they thought would end the conflict. Most of them had told him that killing the poor would end the war. The *Monitor* report ended with the information that 70 percent of the people of El Salvador are poor. Listeners were allowed to formulate their own conclusion, but as a Jesuit friend remarked, you can see why the priests were such a threat.

On October 19, 1989, Gruson and the *Times* offer a report titled "Salvador's Armed Forces Accused By a Medical Team From the U.S." A delegation "consisting of five doctors, a lawyer and a Congressional staff aide," concluded that the Salvadoran armed forces had conducted a campaign of killing, harassment and torture against doctors and health-care workers and "attacked guerrilla field hospitals in violation of the Geneva convention...." This report certainly contradicts the notion that the Cristiani government is a peace-loving one. An increase in repression could have been predicted from their conclusion which stated that, "the persecution of medical personnel was part of a campaign to obstruct religious and relief workers in order to undermine support for guerrillas, whose nine-year-old war against the Government is sustained by a well-organized network of sympathizers." Thus on October 19

### Suppression, Then Disclosure By Edward S. Herman

In March 1981, the Salvadoran army published a list of 138 "traitors" which included a wide array of centrist and leftwing activists and political leaders. Clearly none of the individuals on this death list was going to be able to participate in the election the following year. Indeed, many of them were already underground or in exile, and a number were subsequently murdered.

In none of its many articles dealing with the 1982 and 1984 Salvadoran elections did the *New York Times* ever mention this death list. However, on March 17, 1989, in an article devoted to the leftwing Convergence Coalition, which was making a tentative electoral bid in the March 1989 election, Lindsey Gruson points out that, "In 1981...the armed forces put a bounty on the heads of 138 leftists by publishing a list of their names and describing them as wanted traitors."

Query: Why is this fact disclosed only now? Possible answer: At this point the fact is history and can be used to highlight the relative openness of the 1989 election, where the left did run candidates. In 1982 and 1984 this detail would have raised doubts about the quality of those elections. The *Times* has followed a government agenda in deciding what is newsworthy relating to Salvadoran elections. Other inconvenient details, like legally required voting, ongoing state terror, and the prior destruction of independent newspapers, were also kept out of the news columns in 1982 and 1984. (See Edward S. Herman, "The *New York Times* on the 1984 Salvadoran and Nicaraguan Elections," *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, Number 21 (Spring 1984), p. 7.) ●



the rebels had many sympathizers, but by November 26th they were out of touch with the rest of the country which, by then according to Gruson "remains a bastion of conservative attitudes." The obstinate assertion that the populace is "neutral" in his later November and December reports also directly contradicts his November 14 reporting of fighting in poor neighborhoods in San Salvador. Gruson observes that in

"neighborhoods where the rebels have barricaded themselves, residents spend hours standing around and watching the two sides. In many areas they are the eyes and the ears of the rebels, giving reporters instructions on how to contact the insurgents and warning rebels of moves by the army." ●

*This article was prepared with the assistance of Michael Zielinski, Ellen Braune, and Edward S. Herman.*

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## Two Plane Crashes: El Salvador and Angola

By Edward S. Herman

On November 25, 1989, a plane allegedly carrying weapons to the Salvadoran rebels from Nicaragua crashed in El Salvador. On November 27, a CIA plane carrying weapons to Savimbi and UNITA was shot down in Angola, apparently killing several CIA officers on board.

The *New York Times's* treatment of the two incidents is revealing. The Salvadoran plane crash was given front-page coverage on November 26, a front-page picture on November 27, plus a long inside article on page 3, also illustrated with a photo of Cristiani pointing out the plane's flight path, and stressing the ARENA government's breaking relations with Nicaragua. Among other followup articles, on December 2, an article by Mark Uhlig on page 7 featured "Salvadoran President Says Rebels Are Firing Antiaircraft Missiles." And on December 3, Larry Rohter's piece "How a Plane Crash Upended Peace Plans for Central America," was the only article on El Salvador in the *Sunday News of the Week in Review*. By contrast, it was not until December 1 that the *Times* reported the CIA plane shootdown on page 9 (Robert Pear, "C.I.A. Plane Crash Hurting Peace Drive in Angola, U.S. Says"), which exhausted their coverage as of our press time.

This differential treatment is strictly a political choice. In explaining why little attention was being given to the Israeli air force's shooting down of a Libyan airliner, in which 108 civilians were killed, the *Times* explained editorially (March 1, 1973) that "No useful purpose is served by an acrimonious debate over the assignment of blame for the downing of a Libyan airliner in the Sinai peninsula last week." Similarly, when Savimbi's UNITA shot down an Angolan airliner in 1983, at a cost of 126 lives, this received an aggregate of 10 column inches of space. But when the Soviet Union shot down Korean airliner 007, the *Times* had a special section of the newspaper and an aggregate of 2,789 column inches allocated to this barbaric act. In retrospect, the *Times* admitted that this enormous coverage had been based on a lie ("The Lie That Wasn't Shot Down," Editorial, January 18, 1988), but it had served a "useful purpose," namely, support of the propaganda campaign waged against the Evil Empire by the Reagan administration.

The Salvadoran plane crash was also useful, allowing the Salvadoran struggle to be recast once again into an East-West frame. This is exactly what Bush, Baker, and Cristiani wanted, and the *Times* articles gave them the floor to express their in-

dignation. The focus of the shooting down of the plane in El Salvador diverts attention from the murder of the six clerics and the course of the "investigation" into their deaths, and the wider assault on popular groups and the civilian population by the armed forces. While the *Times* headline claims that the rebels are firing antiaircraft missiles (which ties nicely into the plane incident), the use of 500-pound and phosphorus bombs in heavily populated civilian areas, and the further crackdown on unions and dissident organizations does not receive headline attention. Since 1979 the U.S. government has strived to downplay the inconvenient "excesses" of the armed forces. The priorities remain the same today, with Secretary of State Baker even apologizing openly for the ARENA government crackdown as an "absolutely appropriate" response to the rebel offensive. This statement, reported in an AP dispatch of Nov. 29, was unmentioned in the *Times*.

Implicit in the official western frames and indignation over the Salvadoran incident is the assumption that Nicaragua and the Salvadoran rebels have no right to supply and obtain arms from outside El Salvador, whereas the United States has every right to supply the government of El Salvador, and Savimbi as well. This ludicrous double standard is left implicit; the *Times* does not ask independent critics to comment upon and evaluate the underlying assumptions. Robert Pear, in the tiny article on the CIA plane shootdown, asks a State department spokesperson about the difference in the two cases, and he reports her reply: "We don't do comparisons" (actually, a fabrication, as the State department engages in continual comparisons, very often dishonestly).

The focus of the article by Rohter is that the intervention and plane crash caused a "political defeat" for Nicaragua, weakening its attempt to obtain the demobilization of the *contra* army. The Soviets suffered a huge propaganda defeat as a result of 007, whereas the Israeli government and Savimbi suffered very little following their shooting down of civilian airliners. The shooting down of the CIA plane over Angola has received only slight press attention, and amounts to a tiny public relations pinprick. Is it possible that Nicaragua is suffering a "political defeat" simply because the United States is powerful, and the *Times* serves its aims, whereas a parallel act potentially damaging to the United States has insignificant impact because the press buries the story? ●

# MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE IN EUROPE

By Hans Koning

In July of this year our President campaigned in Europe; his fortunes as reported by the *New York Times* read rather different from the facts as they appeared in the French and Dutch press. (Those of us who had taken ourselves, through the long Vietnam years, to Washington demonstrations, in rain and gloom and dead of night, only to read the following morning that the "official estimate" of our numbers was one tenth of what we thought we had seen, must have been tickled by the NBC report on Bush in Warsaw: "White House estimates of up to a quarter of a million seem inflated. But tens of thousands did turn out....")

First, the Paris summit. Maureen Dowd leads off her evaluation with a flat statement: "Although the French respected Reagan..." (*New York Times*, July 16, 1989, p. A16.) She is not quoting herself (that would be against the rules which the *Times* sets for its reporters) nor those patient stand-bys, the anonymous official(s). This, apparently, is just a fact: "the French" and their "respect." "The French" is journalism's *pars pro toto*, a bit representing a whole, as when "Haiti" votes to keep Cuba blockaded. In Dowd's case it must be a tiny bit; I spend a considerable part of my life in France but never met anyone whose respect for our ex-President went beyond "an amiable fool." On British television, ITV's "Spitting Image" showed Reagan with a brain the size of a pea, which then frequently got lost, and this view of the man pretty much seemed to be the view of those whom I know among "the French." In fact, I would think that Western Europeans, who find themselves intellectual snobs when judging Americans, underestimated the man and were not aware of all the cunning and manipulative powers hidden behind those famous howlers of his.

But Dowd was just setting the stage for a comparison with Bush who, she informs us, is seen in France as a much more "European" politician whose "affable and gracious personality" somehow fits a new perception of America. Here we do have a quote; the "affable and gracious personality" comes from "some high-level participants in the summit meeting." (*New York Times*, July 16, 1989, p. A16.) How tantalizing; what a pity Dowd does not give us a hint who they might be. I turned to France's paper of record, *Le Monde*, for a clue, but the only personal Bush note in a lengthy summit report tells us that while the other participants "moved leisurely through Paris" to the meetings, Mr. Bush "flew along, preceded and followed by cars with their doors open" and that "this rodeo amused the passers-by." (*Le Monde*, July 15-16, 1989.) Well, the French are xenophobic and Dowd's "high-level participants" may have been any of the other five nationalities (six if we include the Americans, but to quote them would hardly have been fair of her). Still, if they were not French, why does she quote them to tell us how Mr. Bush "is seen in France"?

It may be better to move on to Holland where, quoting Dowd, "the warmth and the elegance of the greeting and the thousands of people lining the route of the motorcade" re-

vived the President in The Hague, while in Leiden "several hundred people" in a church heard him deliver "one of the most emotional speeches of his trip" and where on his subject of pluralism he found "receptive listeners in the Dutch who count 26 political parties." (*New York Times*, July 18, 1989, p. A10.) Now this is so much hogwash, for how does Dowd know whether "the Dutch" were receptive? And to get to 26 political parties you would have to include the Neo-Moslem Libertarians and The Seven Tribes of Israel Party.

But let us be polite and check the Dutch press, specifically its paper of record, the conservative *NRC Handelsblad*. "The Hague was empty..." the *NRC* writes. Three old ladies waited in front of the Queen's palace but Mr. Bush did not show. " 'My knees hurt,' one of them told a policeman, but he shrugged and said 'They've gone in at the back.' ... Shopkeepers and office workers were indignant with the excessive security barring them from their work and everyone had slept badly from helicopters with searchlights flying overhead all night. ... In Leiden, the American Embassy had asked the municipality to distribute flyers saying, 'Come and greet Queen Beatrix and President Bush.' " The banners across the streets there "seemed to show public enthusiasm but they had been paid for by the American Embassy." (*NRC Handelsblad*, July 17, 1989.)

As for that emotional, pluralist speech, I can only quote *De Groene Amsterdammer*, admittedly a leftish weekly but the only one dealing with the politics of that speech rather than just the bit about Mr. Bush's Dutch great-grandfather. "Everywhere in Europe his answers on the central question of his journey were different," the *Amsterdammer* wrote. "In Leiden there were triumphant quotes from Churchill and the anti-fascist Dutch poet Jan Campert, as if we were about to defeat a new Hitler." (*De Groene Amsterdammer*, July 19, 1989.)

If a paper such as the *New York Times* appears consistent (un-differentiated) in its views, we all know it is not because some censor keeps its writers on a short leash. The process is more elegant: Its reporters share a common view, a philosophy with few variations, and a man or woman from a different mold, who does *not* per se accept our public myths, does not last long if he or she is mistakenly hired.

Neil Sheehan of the *Times* once wrote that he was lucky his upbringing made him believe in the government statements about Vietnam, because otherwise he would have been fired. In this context, Maureen Dowd's flights of affection for Mr. Bush may seem pretty harmless. But there is more to it: They are but one example of a steady stream of reports which through the years have told us how "France," "the Dutch," "West Germany," etc., etc., were on "our" side, "our" here being the side of our Cold War folks, the Strength-Through-More-Nuclear-Bombs folks. Those of us who know Europe and read European newspapers know this was not so, but we are a minority, and this misunderstanding is of the sort through which wars start. ●



# SOME ANTI PRO-CHOICE CHOICES

By Penny Mintz

Relatively few people in this country are aware that there was a major pro-choice demonstration in Washington on Sunday November 12, 1989.

I knew about it. I was there. But on the following Monday morning, when I eagerly scooped up the *New York Times* to scan the front page for official estimates of the numbers of participants, I began to wonder. There was no headline. There was no lesser story at the bottom of the page. There was not even a picture with a captioned reference to an inside article. There was nothing.

According to official estimates, somewhere between 150,000 and 300,000 people demonstrated that day in Washington. The higher figure is from the National Organization of Women, the lower one the police estimate. The crowds reached from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument and beyond. People kept pouring over the hill. They packed the park nearly from one edge of the mall to the other.

The *Times* did cover the demonstration, but back on page 14. Nevertheless, this was some reassurance that the demonstration had, after all, taken place. Unfortunately, the *Times* report failed to reflect the experiences of most demonstrators.

The information that appears in a headline, in the first few paragraphs, and in the photograph caption is all the information that most readers get from any news report. For those who were in Washington, the caption of the larger photograph accompanying the article was a shock. It read: "Thousands gathered near the Lincoln Memorial for an abortion rights demonstration. It was the second Washington rally this year." The photograph itself, rather than showing the sheer size of the demonstration, was a close-up of a small group.

For the readers who were not in Washington, the photo caption may be all they ever learned about the event. Most would have read no further. (The caption of the smaller photo — a close up of Molly Yard — was no more informative: "And so we say to you, Mr. President, we say no," said Molly Yard, president of the National Organization of Women. "We will not obey your dictates nor those of the Reagan Court.")

The lead paragraph was better than the captions, but it was still grossly inaccurate. It read, "Tens of thousands of people rallied in the nation's capital today on behalf of abortion

rights, celebrating recent political victories and vowing to redouble their efforts in battles to come."

Thousands? Tens of thousands? It was not until the thirteenth paragraph that *Times* reporter Robin Toner finally gave the official numbers: "The Park Police estimated today's crowds at 150,000. Organizers said it was more than twice that size."

If you read the headline, the photo captions, and even the beginning of the article, you would have thought it was a very small demonstration indeed. I called Toner at her Washington office and at the House press office, for an explanation of her downplaying of the size of the demonstration. She referred

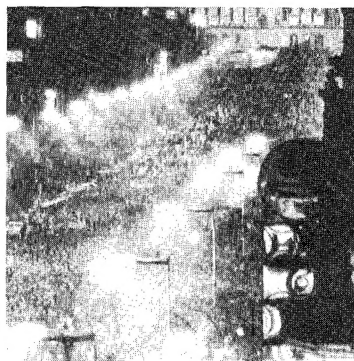
me to her editor, Phil Taubman, who never returned my calls.

Once again, there was an inconsistency between the *Times's* news reports and its editorials, which have been generally supportive of the efforts of the pro-choice movement. There was an editorial the same day, November 13, decrying the need to demonstrate for this cause at all. "The fact that women can draw large crowds to pro-choice demonstrations and can successfully battle for their liberty does

not mean that they should be forced to do so," said the *Times* editorial. "This political warfare only underscores the correctness of *Roe v. Wade*, the Court's original 1973 statement that a woman has a fundamental constitutional right, safe from government interference or the vicissitudes of politics, to choose whether to bear a child." At least the editorial writer recognized the size of the crowd. ●



Both photos were taken at anti-government rallies of about 200,000 people, one against Bush's abortion policies, the other against the Prague government. Guess which picture the *Times* put on page 14, with no indication of the size of the crowd, and which it put on page 1, full view.



## Photo Opportunists

In *The Whole World Is Watching* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), Todd Gitlin compared all six UPI photos available to the *Times* to accompany its story on the April 17, 1965, antiwar march on Washington. Although the *Times's* own news story showed antiwar marcher numbers to outnumber counter-demonstrators by 150 to one, it selected the photo that showed equal numbers and that allowed none of the marchers' signs to be seen. (*Op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.) ●

# THE MIDDLE EAST LIE

By Noam Chomsky

In a column entitled "The Middle East Lie" (*New York Times*, March 21, 1989), former *Times* Executive Editor A.M. Rosenthal complains that "the world no longer sees the reality of the Middle East" and is thus pressuring Israel to negotiate with the PLO. This "blunder" would lead to "another Palestinian state" in addition to "the existing Palestinian state of Jordan," and inevitable war. The problem is that "the world" is in thrall to "a fundamental historical distortion": "the lie [that] Israel refuses to negotiate for peace." "The truth" is that Israel has been trying for 40 years to negotiate a peaceful settlement with its neighbors, while the Arab answer to Israel's peace moves has been "rejection and war." The sole exception is Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in 1977 and the Camp David treaty. "The road to peace is through direct talks between Israel and her Arab neighbors" — excluding the Palestinians.

## Rosenthal's "Truth"

Rosenthal's tale is indeed "the truth" as constructed by Israel and the U.S. establishment — and faithfully recounted for many years by the *New York Times*. But the truth is rather different. Consider the period since the Israeli conquests of June 1967. The record for the crucial first decade, under the rule of the "pragmatic" and "moderate" Labor Party, is documented from cabinet records by Yossi Beilin (*Mehiro shel Ihud*, 1985). The guiding principle throughout, as described by Haim Herzog, now President of Israel, was that the indigenous population cannot be "participants in any way in a land that has been consecrated by our people for thousands of years. To the Jews of this land there cannot be any partner." Accordingly, independent political activities were barred, as when Prime Minister Golda Meir, in 1972, forbade a pro-Jordanian political conference in the West Bank. The governing Likud coalition is still more extreme. Its central component, Herut, the party of Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, insists officially and publicly upon Israel's claim to Jordan.

On June 19, 1967, the Israeli cabinet voted 11-10 to transmit an offer via the U.S. for a settlement with Syria and Egypt on the international (pre-June 1967) borders, but with Israel keeping Gaza. No mention was made of Jordan and the West Bank. This proposal, which Abba Eban described as "the most dramatic initiative that the government of Israel ever took before or since," was rescinded a year later, when Israel put forth the Allon Plan, which called for "territorial compromise." Its terms were that Israel was to keep the Syrian Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and whatever it found of value in the West Bank — including about 40% of the land but not the bulk of the population. In essence, this remains the Labor Party position. There appear to have been no further initia-

tives, and Israel has forcefully rejected other proposals apart from the Camp David arrangements, which removed the major Arab deterrent (Egypt) from the conflict, with predictable effects. The result, as observed by Israeli strategic analyst Avner Yaniv, was that "Israel would be free to sustain military operations against the PLO in Lebanon as well as settlement activity on the West Bank." A vast increase in U.S. aid ensured that these would be exactly the consequences of what Rosenthal calls "the political and spiritual triumph of Camp David."

## Arab Peace Initiatives

Turning to the record of Arab peace initiatives, the first major one was not in 1977 but in February 1971, when Sadat proposed a full peace treaty on the international borders, offering nothing to the Palestinians. This proposal, which conformed closely to the official U.S. stand, was recognized by Israel as a genuine peace offer, but rejected. Israel was backed by the U.S., which preferred "stalemate," as Henry Kissinger later explained.

Another major initiative was in January 1976, when Syria, Jordan, and Egypt brought a resolution to the U.N. Security Council calling for a two-state settlement on the international borders with "appropriate arrangements...to guarantee... the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all states in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries." This is the crucial wording of UN 242, which the U.S. government and the *Times* claim to regard as the proper basis for any settlement. The resolution was openly backed by the PLO, which actually "prepared" it, according to then Israeli U.N. Ambassador Haim Herzog.

Israel refused to attend the U.N. session. The Labor government announced that it would not negotiate with any Palestinians on any political issue and would not negotiate with the PLO under any circumstances. In apparent retaliation against the UN, Israeli jets bombed and strafed Palestinian refugee camps and nearby villages, killing dozens of people in what it called a "preventive strike," an act that elicited little comment here. The U.S. vetoed the resolution.

There are numerous other examples, including offers by Yasser Arafat for negotiations with Israel leading to mutual recognition. All of this has been excised from official history, apart from Sadat's 1977 moves, which, though less acceptable to Israel than his 1971 offer, did lead to a U.S.-Israeli response. The reason was that after the surprising Arab successes in the October 1973 war, it was understood that Egypt could not be simply ignored and should therefore be removed from the conflict with a peace settlement.

*Times* history follows the official line. In its



Credit: New York Times

A.M. Rosenthal.



news and commentary, the major Arab initiatives are down the memory hole, apart from that of Sadat in 1977—which is allowed as part of history, because it satisfied U.S.-Israeli needs. The “peace process” is defined as whatever the U.S. proposes. The *Times* regularly refused to report Arafat’s offers; even letters referring to them were banned. (For details of this record of historical engineering in the service of power,

### Cockburn on A.M. Rosenthal

*The following is an edited excerpt from a talk delivered by Alexander Cockburn at the conference on “Anticommunism and the U.S.: History and Consequences,” sponsored by the Institute for Media Analysis at Harvard University in November 1988. (Transcripts, audiotapes, and videotapes of the 140 conference presentations are available from IMA; write for details.) Note that this was delivered prior to the student demonstrations in China.*

When Nixon and Kissinger went to China they were rapidly followed by many journalists, who suddenly discovered the infinite beauties and wonders of the Chinese system. As far as I know, since that time, although capitalism is now being completely restored, there have been no major changes in China. It is an authoritarian country; it has a very large number of political prisoners, very considerable human rights abuses. Yet A.M. Rosenthal, the former Executive Editor of the *New York Times*, currently an incredibly bad columnist—[applause]. Yes, he is bad, and his column reveals that a very, very rightwing stupid man ran the *New York Times* for a very long time. Anyway, he went to China and wrote a column called “Confessions of a New China Hand.” At the time he was going around China, the Chinese had got into the habit of trundling condemned prisoners around in trucks for the edification of the people and then taking them off and shooting them. Rosenthal felt no particular urge to report on this state of affairs. Had the same thing happened in the Soviet Union, I think he would have felt compelled to write several thousand words about it.

You have to be careful when you equate anticommunism in general with anti-Sovietism in particular, and you have to evaluate the reasons these things occur.

In case anyone thinks I am being unfair to the *New York Times*, which I always try to be, you should remember that when A.M. Rosenthal was developing into an extreme anticommunist you had over at the *Washington Post*, his opposite number, Ben Bradlee, who at that early stage in his career was working at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. According to some recently discovered documents, one of his functions was to try to temper European opinion, which was then widely opposed to the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs. So he was doing a little water carrying for the CIA. ●

see my *Necessary Illusions* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).)

As for Rosenthal’s “existing Palestinian state,” it is true that Jordan is so designated by both major Israeli political groupings. For Rosenthal, that suffices, and it is irrelevant that Jordan—and the Palestinians—vigorously reject this characterization. We might ask how the *Times* would react to an Arab claim that the Jews do not merit a “second homeland” because they already have New York.

### Pre-Six Day War

During the first two decades, the truth is more complex than Rosenthal’s “truth,” including initiatives from Syria, Jordan, and Egypt that were rebuffed, and aggressive Israeli actions that undermined steps towards peace. To cite only one case, after a coup apparently backed by the CIA in 1949, Syrian leader Husni Zaim “made a determined effort to come to terms with Israel,” even offering “to settle 300,000 Palestinian refugees, nearly half the total number, in Syria.” Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion refused even to meet with him, and no serious attention was given to his offer (Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Tom Segev, *1949* (New York: Free Press, 1986)).

In summary, while Rosenthal’s “truth” is faithful to the *Times* version, it bears little resemblance to the truth. ●

### WHOSE HUMAN RIGHTS?

On November 17, two significant reports were released by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for presentation to a General Assembly committee reviewing human rights abuses around the world.

One accused the new Rafsanjani government of Iran of continuing the abuses of its predecessor on the same large scale. They included a “wave of executions,” many by stoning, prison mistreatment, and religious persecution. The other accused the government of El Salvador of presiding over a “resurgence of torture,” including summary executions and torture of prisoners, involving “electric shocks in water tanks, use of drugs and acids, and on many occasions rape and sexual abuse of both men and women” (“U.N. Report Says torture, Political Repression Rising in El Salvador,” Associated Press dispatch, November 17, 1989). Both reports were covered by the wire services.

On November 20, the *New York Times* ran a six-column article by U.N. correspondent Paul Lewis on the Iran report (“U.N. Report Says Iran Still Abuses Human Rights,” p. 19). The *Times* never mentioned the El Salvador report. To the *Times*, the report of continuing abuses in a country at odds with the U.S. government was vastly more important than a report of increased abuses in an ally of the U.S., indeed one that is receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid, and one where, the president periodically certifies, human rights are on the rise. ●

# AIDS: A MEDICAL AND JOURNALISTIC DISASTER

By Bob Lederer

The *New York Times's* coverage of AIDS is a catalogue of serious reporting lapses and imbalances. Major developments are left unreported, or reported months later; reporters are sporadically assigned to key agencies and events; government press releases are virtually reprinted as articles on key policy changes and scientific studies; and large political demonstrations are either ignored or underreported. This, in what health experts agree is the city hardest hit by AIDS; New York's 21,000 AIDS cases have contributed to the near-collapse of the public hospital system and exacerbated social problems, particularly in impoverished Black and Latino communities. Given the *Times's* track record of minimal, often condescending reporting on these communities, and the near-invisibility of gay men and lesbians in its pages, the disastrously inadequate AIDS coverage is no surprise.

Here are some major examples of these reporting lapses in 1989:

- *Late, inadequate or nonexistent coverage of major developments.* While only the toxic, expensive drug AZT has been federally approved to treat (but not cure) AIDS, laboratories and clinics worldwide have developed dozens of experimental AIDS treatments. Thousands of people with AIDS have used these unapproved substances, many obtained through underground networks. The *Times's* practice of reporting only after publication in mainstream medical journals (with the special exception of the AZT coverage noted below) has meant either delaying news of, or virtually ignoring these promising new treatments. Even when covered, the stories tend to be brief compared to articles on other health issues. And grass-roots medical self-help is not considered news at the *Times*. The few treatments covered before federal approval are those made by major pharmaceutical corporations—precisely the most expensive and furthest away from mass production.

Similarly unreported, except pejoratively, have been a range of unorthodox treatments including acupuncture, herbs, nutritional supplements, and special diets—despite preliminary studies suggesting therapeutic efficacy.

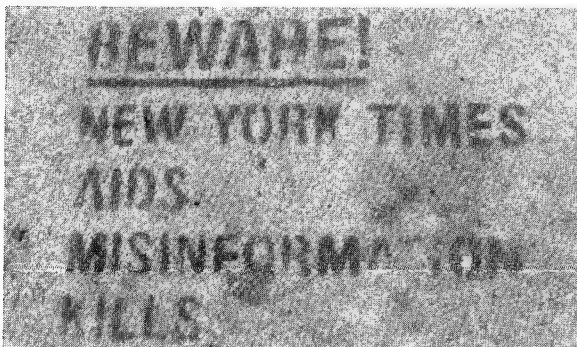
- *Spotty conference coverage.* The “newspaper of record”

failed to cover the following major policy discussions on controversial issues: July 20, 1989, congressional hearings on drug approval regulations; an August 17, 1989, scientific conference on those regulations at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); and a September 11-12, 1989, conference on AIDS research guidelines at the National Institutes of Health. And *Times* coverage of the Fifth International AIDS Conference, June 4-9, in Montreal, attended by 12,000 experts and activists from around the world, was limited to one reporter and about half the number of stories run by either the *Washington Post* or the *Wall Street Journal*. *New York Newsday*, with a much smaller staff, sent five reporters to the conference.

- *Journalism by government press release.* Since 1987, a broad and increasingly sophisticated AIDS activist movement has documented and protested government neglect and obstruction of needed AIDS research and services. Increasing numbers of independent scientists and doctors have challenged predominant dogmas on issues including the causes of AIDS and promising treatment approaches. Yet *Times* coverage has generally reflected U.S. government officials' views. (Under sustained pressure, some recent articles have included “balancing” quotes from community activists.) Two examples of this distinct lack of investigation:

On August 18, 1989, the *Times* joined a virtually unanimous chorus of uncritical media coverage of a press conference by federal health officials claiming that the drug AZT had been found effective in people with the HIV virus (said to cause AIDS) but without symptoms. (Philip J. Hilts, “Drug Said to Help AIDS Cases With Virus but No Symptoms,” p. A1.) Hilts passed along the officials' euphoric comments even though the study on which their conclusions were based had not (and still has not) been published anywhere. Without noting the unusual circumstances or quoting anyone with a contrary view, Hilts flatly asserted, “The findings are the first evidence that AZT...could help people who are not yet ill.” Soon, doctors nationwide began prescribing this highly toxic drug for patients matching the profile of those in the study. Even the staid British medical journal *Lancet* felt forced to editorialize (“Clinical trials of Zidovudine in HIV infection,” August 26, 1989), “...it is very difficult to assess the enthusiastic press releases properly as we have not seen the data to support them.... The results that have been publicized still do not answer the question of when best to prescribe the drug and how to balance efficacy with the complications of long-term drug therapy.... In HIV infection the enormous pressure to find a successful therapy should not diminish the need for good scientific data and proper analysis of trials.”

On September 29, 1989, Hilts reported on a major policy change long demanded by AIDS activists: a “parallel track” for experimental AIDS drugs, whereby a drug shown to have limited toxicity but unproven effectiveness could be released in controlled quantities before FDA approval (“FDA, in Big Shift, Will Permit Use of Experimental AIDS Drugs,” p. A1).



Credit: William H. Schaap

Graffiti on a New York City sidewalk.



Hilts wrote about the first drug so released, ddI, "Scientists and public health officials...expressed concern that the distribution of the drug may make it difficult to get patients to volunteer for the clinical trial [to determine effectiveness]...." In an unpublished letter to the editor, AIDS activist Larry Kramer responded, "Clinical trials for ddI are, and have been for some time, completely filled, indeed overbooked.... So much for the difficulties in filling these trials. Why didn't Mr. Hilts make a few phone calls and discover this information, readily available...?"

● *Ignoring or minimizing major political demonstrations.* In recent months, some federal officials have acknowledged that major changes in AIDS policy have been the direct result of pressure from the growing AIDS activist movement—with thousands of members in over 30 groups, many taking the name ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power). Yet the *Times* systematically avoids mentioning the movement's sometimes years-long campaigns for those changes. While New York's other dailies regularly report on almost-weekly ACT UP demonstrations at corporate and government sites, the *Times* only occasionally sees this as news fit to print, and is more apt to let a photo suffice. Photo captions are sometimes incomplete, as in a "Week in Review" article on FDA policy changes on AIDS drugs (September 24, 1989) illustrated by a photo of a large protest at the FDA in 1988, which failed to mention the protest's sponsors, the national AIDS activist network, ACT NOW. And in some cases, the *Times* simply waits until the news is stale, as on September 14, 1989, when over 1000 ACT UP supporters demonstrated outside the New York Stock Exchange, protesting the \$8,000-a-year price of AZT charged by its manufacturer, Burroughs Wellcome. Inside, seven activists were arrested after gaining access, unfurling a banner, and chaining themselves to the railing. Despite extensive media coverage, from CBS network news to the *Indonesian Times*, the *New York Times* carried not a word until two days later.

Since 1969, with the launching of the modern lesbian and gay liberation movement, people whom society calls "homosexuals"—a clinical and sex-centered designation—have claimed "lesbian" and "gay" as names of pride, much as those formerly called "Negroes" proudly adopted "Black" and "African-American." The "lesbian" and "gay" appellations have not only become virtually universal among members of those communities, many mainstream media have long since adopted the terms in regular usage.

But not the *Times*. In 1988, after pressure by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation led to a meeting with *Times* management, the paper grudgingly announced that "lesbian" and "gay" would be used, but only as *adjectives*, not nouns. So the outdated and disrespectful term "homosexual" is still a frequent presence. Similarly, since 1983, the movement of people with AIDS has argued that they are neither "victims," implying helplessness and hopelessness, nor necessarily "patients," but people with AIDS or PWAs. Again, while other media (and the medical community) are gradually acknowledging the community's wishes, the *Times* stubbornly insists on using "AIDS victim."

## Activist Response

The litany of imbalances in *Times* AIDS coverage has evoked a strong activist response. In 1987, ACT UP/New York began to campaign for fairer and fuller coverage and editorials. Several detailed letters and meetings with *Times* officials, in the climate of a growing militant movement, did produce minor improvements in 1988 and 1989, according to ACT UP, but the basic problems remain the same. Prompted by a June 29, 1989, editorial (see sidebar), hundreds of ACT UP supporters demonstrated on July 25 at the Manhattan home of *Times* publisher Arthur Sulzberger, whose family owns 70% of The New York Times Company. They distributed a flyer charging, "When the world's leading newspaper runs incompetent AIDS coverage, it sends the clear message around the world that the epidemic is not a crucial story. This is not merely bad journalism—what amounts to an AIDS news blackout has already cost thousands of lives." The demonstrators marched 40 blocks to the *Times* office, where they were met by a phalanx of riot police. The *Times*, with the rest of the mainstream media, did not cover the large, angry demonstration. Perhaps this was the most telling silence of all. ●

*The author wishes to thank Robert Camyre of ACT UP's Media Committee for research assistance. ACT UP can be reached at 212-989-1114.*

## *Times* Editorials on AIDS

Like the *Times*'s reporting of AIDS, its editorials have been inconsistent and at times, critics charge, outrageous. On the one hand, occasional editorials have called for increased government spending, less corporate profiteering, and measures to stop discrimination against people with AIDS. But the *Times* has also endorsed government lists of those testing HIV-positive, mandatory HIV tests for prisoners and immigrants, and tracing of sexual contacts of HIV-positive people—all measures condemned by most public health professionals.

Perhaps most offensive to PWA advocates has been the recurring theme that AIDS is not an urgent problem for the "general population." This term implies that gay men, intravenous drug users, people of color, and others with AIDS are not also part of society. One such editorial appeared on June 29, 1989. In "Why Make AIDS Worse Than It Is?" the *Times* harshly criticized a General Accounting Office study concluding that AIDS cases were underreported by one-third and calling for more funding for AIDS services. The editorial called the higher figure alarmist and increased spending unwarranted, saying, contrary to growing evidence, "the disease is still very largely confined to specific risk groups. Once all susceptible members are infected, the numbers of victims will decline." ●

# SHIRLEY CHRISTIAN AND THE *TIMES* ON CHILE

By JoAnn Wypijewski

In 1982 A.M. Rosenthal took a trip to Central America. Accuracy in Media had been hounding the *Times* about its coverage, particularly the work of Raymond Bonner. Rosenthal met with Bonner, also with the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, who thought Bonner too engaged, not objective. The Ambassador's complaints were not very different in import from those made against several journalists that same year by Shirley Christian, now the *Times* Latin America correspondent. Back then, Christian thought her colleagues were treading too lightly on the Sandinistas, and she said so in an article in the *Washington Journalism Review*. Rosenthal met Christian on his trip and tried to hire her for the *Times*. Within a year Bonner was effectively out; within two Christian was on her way up.

On the subject of Chile, perhaps no member of the mainstream press has been as determined a falsifier as Shirley Christian. When, in the 1980s, General Augusto Pinochet was consolidating through law fascist domination of the country's institutions, when his economists were engineering a crushing transfer of wealth from poor to rich and his police persisting in their predations upon the people, she portrayed Chile not as a zone of state terror but as a testing ground for bold and exciting, if occasionally dislocating, change. Well in advance of the 1988 plebiscite (a yes-no referendum on extending Pinochet's "presidency") she propagandized for the vicious experiments coming out of the dictator's "Lab for Free Markets" (*New York Times*, June 21, 1987; for analysis, see Alexander Cockburn, *The Nation*, July 18, 1987).

In reporting on the plebiscite Christian never conveyed to her readers the political atmosphere in which it occurred. The day before the vote, activists on the left, from party leaders to neighborhood organizers, had abandoned their homes and moved among a series of safe houses in anticipation of a renewal of terror to nullify a NO vote. A fellow international observer in Santiago told me that he had not known a city to be so gripped by fright since he was a boy in Vienna in the 1930s. But this was a reality inimical to the portrait of a country "on the road to democracy." When Christian filed a report following the victory of the NO, she chose her words to convey the proud and respectful nature of such a journey: "After 15 years of tough military rule, the Government of President Augusto Pinochet pledged today to abide by the voters' rejection of an extension of General Pinochet's term" (*New York Times*, October 7, 1988). Compare this with Clara Germani in the *Christian Science Monitor* on the same day: "The electoral repudiation of dictator Augusto Pinochet breathes life and legitimacy into the opposition's movement

for a return to democracy." Where others see tyranny or dictatorship, Christian sees *tough* rule, toughness here being tempered by association with the active verbs of public service: Pinochet *pledges*; he will *abide* by the voters' wishes; he does so as their *President* even though his only *term* was got through treason and sealed, seven years later, through murder, intimidation and a phony election in which, as a *Los Angeles Times* reporter observed, "the main challenge to the government was to take care not to announce more voters than there are Chileans." Similarly obliterating this history, on August 31, 1988, the *New York Times* ran a cover photo of Pinochet with the caption, "Pinochet to Seek a Third Term."

## Shadow Dance With the Dictator

Now in advance of the first presidential election in 19 years, Christian is again loyally at work. This time she is assisted by the unified opposition's candidate, Patricio Aylwin, who speaks constantly of "stability" and the need to preserve the "successful free-market economy." In an August 28, 1989, article she writes, "The Aylwin camp is conscious... of the economic traumas that were a major factor in the interruption in Chilean democracy 16 years ago, when the armed forces led by General Pinochet overthrew the Socialist President, Salvador Allende Gossens, who died in the course of the coup."

Allende was assassinated in the course of the coup. The "interruption" of democracy led in short order to the murder of 2,000 people according to the *New York Times*, 15,000 according to Harald Edelstam, former Swedish ambassador to Chile; it involved the arrest and torture of tens of thousands, and the installation of military men in government, business, education, and public utilities. Aylwin and his camp are understandably conscious of the economic traumas during the Allende years; they helped to create or abet them. Christian writes that in 1973 "some senior Christian Democrats, including Mr. Aylwin, *appeared* to support the coup." Aylwin was president of the Christian Democratic Party in 1973. In advertisements during the 1988 plebiscite campaign, Pinochet forces used old footage of Aylwin denouncing the Allende government. As a close associate of Eduardo Frei, whose victory as President of Chile in 1964 was considerably helped along by the CIA, he was among those who exercised the party's power in Congress over taxes, the budget and wages to help sabotage the economy, and who maneuvered the party into collaboration with fascist elements. His was the party that urged Allende in 1973 to reverse nationalization and revamp the government with the "institutional participation" of the



Credit: New York Times

Shirley Christian.

armed forces — i.e. submit to a “legal” coup — and whose governing council issued a statement in the wake of Pinochet’s attack saying that Allende himself had been “preparing to stage a violent coup...in order to install a Communist dictatorship” and that “everything indicates that the armed forces did nothing more than respond to this immediate risk.” For a full account see James Petras and Morris Morley, *The United States and Chile* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), and Edward Boorstein, *An Inside View...Allende’s Chile* (New York: International Publishers, 1977).

### Recipe for Distortion

Aylwin’s economic adviser, and likely Minister of Finance should he triumph in December, Alejandro Foxley, is therefore a useful instrument for Christian in advancing the ideological underpinning of Pinochet’s economic program without actually appearing as an apologist for dictatorship. “The Socialists in this country,” he says, “know they have to prove that they can govern without producing severe economic problems.” The allusion is to the Allende period, characterized by Christian as a state of “near-economic anarchy,” when “much of the country was opposing factory and farm takeovers and other attempts at state control, [when] shortages were widespread and annual inflation approached four digits.” Here we can discern in concentrated form the three deceitful propositions central to anything Shirley Christian writes about Chile:

- *The failure of socialism.* History is inconvenient here, so it is simply excised. From the day of Allende’s election in 1970 the ruling class and U.S. government began to mobilize and act for economic destabilization by bank withdrawals, cutbacks in foreign credits, economic sanctions, and a wide range of devices to “make the economy scream” (Nixon’s words). Despite this, a 1972 OAS study concluded that the Allende government had eliminated stagnation and had achieved “a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth.” The economy, it said, “is in a situation of almost full utilization of its productive capacity, following a year marked by high growth levels. Unemployment has been reduced markedly and a broad process of redistribution of income and accelerated agrarian reform has been carried out.” Between 1970 and 1972 per capita income in Chile rose by 7.7 percent; whereas between 1972 and 1986 it fell by 12.2 percent (as did GNP and consumption, see below). The situation deteriorated rapidly in 1973 as a result of Kissinger-inspired economic warfare. Christian buries this history, just as in reciting the accomplishments of Pinochet she neglects to mention the major U.S. and international financial support (\$590 million in loans and credits in his first six months).

- *The scorn of the people.* As is her habit, in the August 28 story Christian notes that Allende “failed to get a majority of the popular vote in 1970” and, referring elliptically to the wave of strikes in 1973, says that “much of the country” opposed the government. She ignores that in legislative elections that year Popular Unity increased its share of the vote dramatically, from 36.6 to 43.4 percent, despite nearly \$4 million in CIA funds for anti-Allende candidates and media time. She also ignores that the majority of an \$8 million CIA subvention went

for strike benefits or similar bribes, and that just days before the coup, Santiago’s streets rang with Allende supporters. She sensibly chooses not to explore Pinochet’s popularity or to address the evidence of corruption and nepotism associated with the general, hinted at occasionally even in the Chilean press.

- *The benefits of “equilibrium.”* To the August article the *Times* editors appended a drop head asking, “After Pinochet, a healthy economy or disaster?” In the lead to an October 23 story Christian states that Pinochet is creating a powerful central bank to “help preserve Chile’s hard-won economic stability, growth and modernization.” In the final paragraph we learn that Pinochet would appoint the bank’s governing council, which Christian suggests would act in a nonideological fashion to regulate foreign exchange and otherwise maintain what one banker calls “macroeconomic equilibria.” Chile itself has a curious kind of equilibrium, one by which the top 200 companies have increased their profits fivefold since 1980 while bank repossessions have resulted in a wave of evictions in Santiago’s poor neighborhoods; by which the richest 20 percent of families hold 62 percent of the national income while, even without subtracting for other costs, a family of four with one minimum-wage earner cannot afford a half-kilo of bread, a half-liter of milk, and an egg per person per day; by which Pinochet and Christian can exult in “five consecutive years of strong growth” while half the population is poor; and wages, because of fiddling with the Consumer Price Index, are basically keeping up with the price of tennis rackets.

Christian’s five consecutive years of growth are well chosen, missing an early post-coup collapse and starting at the bottom of a severe recession. A longer, less biased time line gives a different picture: Based on *official* national accounts, Chile’s per capita GNP fell 6.4 percent between 1972 and 1987. Per capita consumption fell 23 percent. Of those five years, even the Inter-American Development Bank reports that growth here represents the natural curve of the business cycle, having been engendered by idle capacity and unemployment, and may have reached its limit. Chilean reality is spelled out more vividly by the worker whose minimum wage in 1976 could buy 238 kilos of bread but can buy only 98 kilos today; by the average person, whose daily calorie intake dropped from 2,315 in 1972 to 1,869 in 1986. Malnutrition is widespread.

Shirley Christian, certainly the most exuberant promoter of Pinochet’s economic “miracle,” is hardly the only one. On October 10, 1988, Alan Riding called the economy “the positive legacy of the dictatorship.” This from a man considered to be on the far left fringe of the *Times*, one whom Christian once attacked as a dupe of the Sandinistas. Indeed, the greatest miracle of the Pinochet era has been the mass media’s transformation of long-term absolute economic decline and ruthless degradation of living conditions into a “positive legacy.” Immediately after Pinochet accepted the results of the plebiscite last year, journalists began writing about both how the opposition would deal with the economy and the question of human rights violations, apparently the negative legacy. Today, as the election approaches, the regime’s crimes against humanity seem to have been forgotten by the press. But like the victim lists, the balance sheets are written in blood. ●



# CLASS AND COCAINE IN COLOMBIA

By Ingrid Arnesen and Carl Ginsburg

Class conflict has been at the core of Colombia's unscrutinized yet much-publicized war for decades. But it is only in the form of a drug war that this conflict has reached readers and viewers of the major media outlets in the U.S.

Barely a week after President Bush's widely televised Drug Emergency Assistance program (brought to Colombians that same night by Cable TV), the *New York Times* put forward "U.S. Sending Wrong Equipment to Fight Drugs, Colombians Say" on its front page. (September 12, 1989.) Citing "American and Colombian officials," the *Times* article reported that "the aid serves mainly as a symbolic show of American support" and quoted a senior police officer saying, "Our operations will be essentially the same as before" (emphasis added). That week, four shipments under Bush's \$65 million emergency plan for Colombia had already brought in jeeps, helicopters, ammunition, guns, and communications equipment.

## U.S. Spends, But Not to Fight Drugs

For readers who may have wondered where the "symbolism" lay, the *Times* article offered a rather simplistic explanation: "One reason, the officials say, is that the equipment is coming from American military stockpiles and is more compatible with the army and air force than with the police." It went on to explain that the U.S. emergency aid was in the form of military assistance, which by U.S. law may only be handed over to foreign *military* authorities, as opposed to *police* forces. But since, we were told, the Colombian military is largely on the sidelines of the drug war (an earlier paragraph reported that 85 to 90 percent of the drug war is carried out by the police), the aid was "symbolic" because the forces most in need simply were not getting the goods.

Admitting that the aid was almost entirely going to the military, one might have expected the *Times* report to probe what that aid would be used for or, short of that, what it might signal in terms of greater military readiness or participation. Here the *Times* reporting again resorted to another official platitude: "The Americans and Colombian police say they hope that the army and air force will begin taking a more active role in the drug war...."

Colombia's wealthy elite may hope for service from the army and air force against enemies other than the drug cartel. Their country has experienced its own version of the "Roaring Eighties." Real estate and stock prices have boomed—cocaine money hardly impeded that process—while wages remain extremely low, factories immensely profitable. Landholders have successfully resisted reforms. (Colombia's crusading president, Virgilio Barco Vargas, is the scion of landholding millionaires.) Predictably and tragically, poverty is everywhere. The official poverty rate stood at 43.2 percent in 1987. One in four Colombians suffers from malnutrition. (Gary Hoskin, "Colombia's Political Crisis," *Current History*, January 1988, p.12.)

These terrible economic conditions undoubtedly explain

the large number of guerrilla organizations openly battling the class war outside the cities. The largest of such groups, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), is perhaps best known. In an ill-fated effort at participation in electoral politics, the FARC and various other progressive forces helped to form the Unión Patriótica (UP), a legal political party. In the four years since its founding, the UP has seen 850 of its members assassinated, including a presidential candidate, two senators, two representatives, and a mayor. The Centro de Investigaciones y Educación Popular (CINEP), a non-governmental research organization, reports that 11 persons die *each day* in Colombia for their political beliefs. ("The Killings in Colombia," *Americas Watch Report*, April 1989, p. 39.) Indeed, Colombia's class war is violent.

## Funding Repression

The *Times's* explanation of the symbolism of the U.S. aid would seem satisfactory if it were not for this *other war*, the class war, a war waged by the recipients of the U.S. aid—the Colombian military and the paramilitary groups that are its shadow—against virtually anyone identified with the left. "We have received reports," a military prosecutor, Omar Henre Velasco, told CBS News in 1988, "that military vehicles were following union leaders or human rights advocates or university professors who were subsequently killed." (*CBS Evening News*, March 2, 1988.) No surprise to Amnesty International, which reports that in the past 16 months, some 2,500 Colombians were victims of "extrajudicial executions" by the armed forces and groups helping them or acting on their orders, and that 250 victims "disappeared" after being taken into custody.

Americas Watch reports that "officers in positions of responsibility...participate in these [political] crimes or lend support to them in the form of intelligence, logistics, or by ensuring the impunity of the killers." ("The Killing in Colombia," *op. cit.*, p. 40.) It is crucial to note that *not one person has been convicted for any of the murders of members of the Unión Patriótica*. Unmentioned by the *New York Times*, the Colombian military's role as a repressive force is well established—and should have at least been raised by the *Times* as a matter of concern respecting the uses to which U.S. aid is put.

The *Times* might also have noted that the week following Bush's magnanimous overture to Colombia and its military, measures were being carried out which only buttressed the military's posture. These events were nowhere mentioned despite *their* symbolism: an undeclared state of siege put in force to give the military authorities full powers over public law and order; a decree forbidding public gatherings, this in the name of the country's crisis; and yet another decree which allowed for the detention "incommunicado for a minimum of seven days" of any suspicious person. During this same period, a nationwide teachers' work stoppage and a strike by banana workers were treated as threats to the public order, and were met with military clampdowns. Arrests, disappearances and

murders of union leaders ensued. The banana workers' chief negotiator was found mysteriously murdered. In Medellín, the center of the "drug war," four members of the city's judicial commission were placed under arrest without charges. When inquiry was made on their behalf by the national Andean Judicial Commission, the military refused to acknowledge the arrests and failed to investigate. (Several military officers in that region were being dismissed because of their conspicuous links to the drug cartels.) Finally, principal representatives of the Unión Patriótica went back into hiding after an escalation of anonymous threats against their lives. Meanwhile, the main forces in the drug war remained without their promised assis-

tance. Judges received neither the bullet-proof vests nor armed guards that had been promised, under the emergency U.S. aid package and the police saw little more than eight jeeps.

During that week, while the U.S. clamored via the pages of the *New York Times* and other corporate media organs for an intensified assault on the drug lords — a "drug war" — the Colombian masses hardly gained from the White House's generosity. Conclusively, the *New York Times's* notion of the U.S. aid as "symbolic" found meaning in a more somber context — befitting U.S. policy, whose aid is not to fight greed but equity. ●

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## ISRAELIS TRAIN THE COCAINE PARAMILITARIES WHILE THE *TIMES* TRAINS ITS EYES AWAY

By Jane Hunter

The *New York Times* has never given much attention to the frequent linkage of narcotics trafficking and right-wing covert operations. And it has consistently avoided a focus on Israel's covert support of many of the world's most sordid powers. Thus, it is not surprising that the *Times's* coverage of the revelations about Israeli "security consultants" who armed and trained the paramilitary squads of the Colombian cocaine cartels was reluctant and disingenuous.

The newspaper all but ignored the testimony given last year to the Senate Subcommittee on Narcotics, Terrorism and International Operations about a joint Israeli-CIA operation called the Harari Network, which moved arms to Central America and cocaine from Colombia to the U.S. between 1982 and 1985. And the paper was slow to follow up NBC-TV's reports during the week of August 22, which showed a video snip of Israeli trainers working with recruits for the Medellín cartel armies and disclosed that Mike Harari, a senior Israeli intelligence official and the network's leader, was involved in the current affair.

In reporting on the Israeli-narco-paramilitary connection, the *New York Times* has been more loyal to the Israeli state than either the Israeli press or the U.S. Jewish press — especially on the issue of whether Lt. Col. (Res.) Yair Klein and his company, Spearhead Ltd., were in Colombia under Israeli government auspices. *Washington Jewish Week* (September 1, 1989) ran a Jewish Telegraphic Agency account noting that when the 800 government-licensed "Israeli entrepreneurs, mostly retired [army] officers, engage in this sort of business privately, they do it with the knowledge and consent of the defense establishment."

Israeli papers, which are all subject to government censorship, found many ways to intimate that the defense ministry was, at best, inattentive and too tolerant. The *Jerusalem Post* and *Yediot Aharonot*, in particular, speculated about the names of the former generals and parliament members whose similar activities in Colombia over the years Klein threatened to expose if the state moved to prosecute him. Their stories

were extensively quoted by many major wire services, but not by the *New York Times*.

### The *Times* Coverage

The *Times's* August 26 story started promisingly: "The Israeli government is trying to distance itself from Israeli mercenaries who were reported to have been supervising Colombian drug traffickers' assassination squads." But if there were any reasons why this might be difficult for Israel to do, they were not in the piece by Joel Brinkley in Jerusalem.

Instead, the *Times* simply repeated Israel's assertions that Spearhead had never been issued a permit to operate in Colombia and that Israel could not control the acts of its citizens abroad.

The background the *Times* provided was garbled. Especially ironic was its statement that Klein "is believed to have headed a paramilitary training squad that supervised assassinations for Colombian drug traffickers." Although the Colombian government believes that some of Klein's trainees were responsible for the August 18 assassination of presiden-



Credit: Wide World Photos

Lt. Col. (Reserves) Yair Klein arriving at police station for questioning, August 28, 1989.

tial candidate Luís Carlos Galán, which inspired its subsequent crackdown, it has only said that Klein *trained* the paramilitaries, not that he *supervised* them.

Why the widely reported affair might be "harming Israel's international image" is never seriously dealt with in Brinkley's article, beyond a quote from former Mossad chief Meir Amit, ruling that "the security business" had become Israel's trademark abroad. That trademark is a testament to the success of a policy, pursued for over two decades, to develop an arms export industry and to make Israel an indispensable "strategic ally" of the U.S. for such undertakings as the wars against Nicaragua and Angola.

The closest the *New York Times* got to these concepts was a September 8 Op-Ed piece in which Andrew Cockburn noted that Klein could "lay bare his relations with Mr. Reuter at the [Israeli] Ministry of Defense [in charge of arms export permissions]."

Brinkley returned to the subject in a September 1 report, "Israeli Reservist Denies Training Drug Dealers." The title and opening paragraphs use an apologetic frame featuring Israeli denials and explanations, not original charges and facts that contradict the apologetics. His report on a two-hour interview with Klein recounted Israel's latest moves to "dissociate" itself from his activities and—somewhat more skeptically—Klein's claims that he believed he was training farmers to defend themselves against leftist guerrillas. Built on ranchers' vigilante organizations, the narco-paramilitaries have massacred thousands of leftist political and grassroots leaders.

The *Chicago Tribune* (August 29, 1989) cited a Colombian government report that during one training session Klein and

his men had stayed at the home of Medellín boss José Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha. When the *Los Angeles Times* (September 1, 1989) interviewed Klein, it quoted him saying, "I go in where the government can't go, where it can't allow its name to be used."

### Burying the Facts

Much of the rest of what the *Times* did on this subject, it hid. On August 25, it buried its first brief mention of the Israeli trainers deep in a story about the counterattack of the narco-traffickers against the Colombian government's crackdown. Deceptively, the paper said the Colombian foreign minister was unable to confirm Israeli reports on the matter, when those reports had simply said that Klein was identified by colleagues who recognized his voice on the video.

On August 29, when the paper did its first (tiny) story from Colombia on the cartel squad training, it quoted the head of DAS, Colombia's secret service, confirming the presence of the Israelis. But it devoted most of that article to the British mercenaries working with the Cali cartel. When Colombia issued a warrant for Klein's arrest, the *Times* gave the story four lines at the end of a piece about a rocket attack on the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá (September 19, 1989).

Until the *New York Times*, from which most of the nation's media outlets take their cue, takes Israel's foreign operations seriously, acknowledges that there is a pattern to them (in this case that was obvious, as the wire services reported that Klein and his mates had left one training session early to work with the *contras*), describes them in detail and with context, and features them, the public that might care will simply dismiss them as anomalous scandals. ●

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# THE SECRET PAN AM 103 REPORT

## NO ONE IS TALKING ABOUT

By Howard Friel

After Pan American flight 103, en route from Frankfurt to the U.S. via London, blew up over Lockerbie, Scotland, on December 21, 1988, killing 259, PanAm's insurance company, U.S. Aviation Underwriters, began an extensive inquiry to discover who had planted the bomb. In mid-1989, it hired Interfor, described in a States News Service dispatch (December 1, 1989) as "a New York consulting group made up of ex-CIA and Mossad agents," to conduct a confidential investigation. In late October Interfor submitted a 27-page report to the underwriters. Its findings, if true, are shocking:

- A joint CIA-State Department special hostage-rescue team, of from five to eight people, was on board the plane. They were on an unannounced return from Lebanon, carrying maps showing the location of some of the American hostages there. They were also bringing information about what they believed to be an unauthorized and illegal scheme concocted by another CIA group in Frankfurt (called "CIA-1" in the report) providing protection to terrorists smuggling arms and drugs into the U.S., in return for information about hostages. "The [hostage-rescue] team was outraged, believing that its rescue [operation] and their lives would be endangered by the double dealing."

- The terrorists utilized PanAm flights out of Frankfurt, where they controlled a Turkish baggage handler who could switch bags after they had been inspected. Both CIA-1 and the German police learned in advance from the leader of one of the terrorist groups they worked with, Syrian Monzer Al-Kassar, that a bomb was going to be placed on flight 103 by another group, led by Palestinian Ahmed Jibril. CIA-1 also knew of the special team's travel plans.

- Because CIA-1 "did not want to blow its surveillance operation and undercover penetration or to risk the Al-Kassar hostage release operation," they did not take any direct steps to stop the flight, assuming that the German police

would intervene, without exposing their operation.

### The Media Coverup

Admittedly, the Interfor report has some curious aspects. It was prepared primarily by Israelis, and it makes Mossad look good and the CIA, the Germans, and all Arabs look bad. It also suggests that PanAm — its indirect client — was almost beyond reproach (CIA-1 in Frankfurt ensured that security at PanAm was minimal while stepped up at the other airlines).

Nevertheless, it is strange that the major media have given little coverage to the report, despite an abiding interest in the plane crash. Selected pages were leaked — to wire services, to a Member of Congress, and to several newspapers. The networks have them as well. Rumors of the report were circulating in Scotland even before the first known newspaper article appeared, in the *Toronto Star* on November 12. The *Syracuse Post-Standard* carried a local AP dispatch on November 20. The States News Service ran a dispatch on December 1. Representative James Traficant (Dem.-Ohio), announced with indignation that he was going to conduct an investigation, noting that PanAm had subpoenaed the CIA, the FBI, and the State Department.

Although, on November 18, CBS's *Saturday Night* with Connie Chung gave several minutes to the report, when PBS's *Frontline* aired a special on flight 103 on November 28, they did not mention the report. When ABC's *Prime Time Live* ran a similar special on November 30, they also ignored the report. To date, no major newspaper, nor any network nightly news program, has mentioned the report and its astonishing allegations.

Perhaps they prefer the simple view that only Arabs were involved in the incident; possibly also they are repeating their practice of refusing to discuss evidence of wrongful behavior associated with yet another CIA covert operation. ●

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Credit: Terry Allen

Some of the "sophisticated weapons" used by the FMLN during the November offensive in El Salvador, combining spray cans, magazines, and nails, tied together to make homemade bombs.

## PICTURE PROBLEMS

By Ellen Ray

The photo on our cover shows Vice-President Quayle viewing an alleged FMLN arms cache, taken at a weapons display staged for the press in San Salvador. A near-identical picture appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* on June 14, 1989. The early edition of the *Times* had the bizarre caption: **Quayle Stresses Human Rights at Meeting in San Salvador.** A subcaption named his companions in the photo as Defense Minister Gen. Humberto Laris and Army Chief of Staff Col. Emilio Ponce, and said that he also met with Roberto D'Aubuisson (all well-known to human rights activists). It went on to say that the Vice-President was holding "a Soviet-made flame thrower reportedly confiscated from guerrillas."

The irony of the caption was apparently too much even for the *Times*, and subsequent editions revised it to read, **Quayle Meets With Salvadoran Leaders.** The misidentified flame thrower was now correctly described as a grenade launcher. (Neither caption pointed out, however, that Quayle was holding the weapon backwards.)

The *Times* picture was taken by Agence France-Presse, which denied *LOOT* permission to purchase reproduction rights after they conducted an inquiry into the name and intentions of our publication. It seems the U.S. media have no monopoly on censorship. ●

## Lies Of Our Times

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